

# Senior Companions

## Accomplishment Report

October 1999 - September 2000

April 2001

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- AmeriCorps, whose members serve with local and national organizations to meet community needs while earning education awards to help finance college or training;
- Learn and Serve America, which helps link community service and learning objectives for youth from kindergarten through college as well as youth in community-based organizations; and
- The National Senior Service Corps (Senior Corps), the network of programs that helps Americans age 55 and older use their skills and experience in service opportunities that address the needs of their communities. Senior Corps includes the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), Foster Grandparent Program, and Senior Companion Program.

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## INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the community service accomplishments from all Senior Companion Projects for the period between October 1, 1999 and September 30, 2000, as reported on the Senior Companion Program (SCP) accomplishment survey. The survey sample consisted of a census of all 202 SCP projects with a random selection of 1,091 community organizations serving as volunteer stations within those projects. The accomplishments are grouped within four of the Corporation for National Service's program emphasis areas: Health and Nutrition, Human Needs Services, Community and Economic Development, and Public Safety.<sup>1</sup>

## SUMMARY OF SENIOR COMPANION PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS

This summary of the overall Senior Companion Program accomplishments was drawn from information about accomplishments from all 202 Senior Companion Projects that were active between October 1, 1999 and September 30, 2000 (referred to in this report as the *current reporting year*). During this period, the Senior Companions:

- Participated in activities such as peer counseling, support, writing letters, listening, reading, and talking to over 68,000 frail adults.
- Provided services such as light housekeeping, meal preparation, and nutritional information to over 25,000 frail adults needing long-term care at home.
- Provided information on respite service to over 18,000 frail adults and their caregivers.
- Senior Companions allowed organizations in which they served to offer new in-home services to over 5,900 frail adults.
- Provided nurturing and support to 5,000 terminally ill adults.
- Aided and assisted over 3,800 frail, abused adults and their families.
- Provided support services to over 3,400 frail adults with mental health problems or environmental impairment.
- Provided support services to over 4,200 frail adults with developmental disabilities.
- Provided services, rehabilitation, therapy, and exercise to over 4,500 frail adults with physical disabilities.
- Provided health services at a clinic, hospital, mobile-unit, nursing home or adult day care to over 15,000 frail adults.
- Provided information on in-home care services to 15,000 frail adults.

## BACKGROUND

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<sup>1</sup> The scope of information requested on the survey is not exhaustive, and not every accomplishment has been captured.

The Senior Companion Program (SCP) is authorized under Title II, Part C of the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973, as amended (P.L. 93-113). Since 1993, the Senior Companion Program has been administered by the Corporation for National Service.

The Senior Companion Program provides grants to qualified agencies and organizations for the dual purpose of: engaging persons 60 and older, particularly those with limited incomes, in volunteer service to meet critical community needs; and to provide a high quality experience that will enrich the lives of the volunteers. Program funds are used to support Senior Companions in providing supportive, individualized services to help adults with special needs maintain their dignity and independence. Through the Senior Companion Program, volunteers provide assistance and friendship to adults in need of extra support, who are often homebound and living alone. Senior Companions not only assist frail adults with chores and errands, they also help make the lives of the people they serve less lonely. Senior Companions often serve clients for several years and form the most meaningful friendships in their lives. Senior Companions usually serve two to four clients, providing an average 20 hours of weekly service. Senior Companions must meet income eligibility requirements and receive reimbursement to offset expenses associated with serving.

The Senior Companion Program is one of three national programs that comprise the National Senior Service Corps. The Senior Companion Program, Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), and the Foster Grandparents Program (FGP) were crafted on the belief that senior volunteers are valuable resources in meeting community needs.

## **STUDY METHODOLOGY**

The accomplishments described in this report were derived from the survey form entitled, “Meeting Community Needs: A Survey of the Senior Companion Program’s (SCP) Activities, Inputs and Accomplishments” conducted by Aguirre International, an independent social science research firm, under contract to the Corporation for National Service.

This survey covers four priority areas, Health/Nutrition, Human Needs Services, Community and Economic Development and Public Safety, which encompass 23 Basic Human Needs (BHN) codes and 41 specific accomplishment items. Volunteer station lists were requested from all 202 Senior Companion Program projects. Over 90 percent of the lists were received. Next, using a simple random sampling (SRS) procedure, 1,091 community agencies where Senior Companions are stationed were selected from these lists for the study. (See the Appendix for a more complete description of sampling and weighting.) Surveys for the stations selected were sent to Senior Companion project directors, who were asked to send copies of the survey to the station coordinators, make phone or in-person appointments to review the survey, and work cooperatively with station supervisors to ensure that the survey was answered completely and

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accurately. The survey achieved a 90 percent response rate (766 of 849 surveys were completed and returned)<sup>2</sup>. The results of the survey reflect the entire population with 95 percent confidence (+ or - 3 percent standard error). This means that the estimates in this report have a high degree of precision.

## **PROGRAM EMPHASIS AREAS AND SAMPLE ACTIVITIES**

This section describes selected characteristics of the Senior Companion Program as a whole for the current reporting year, including the percentage of volunteers engaged in the four program emphasis areas (Health and Nutrition, Human Needs Services, Community and Economic Development, and Public Safety), the percentage of clients served by these volunteers, and the percentage of volunteer hours served in each program emphasis area.

### ***Health and Nutrition***

Senior Companion activities may include supportive roles in the delivery of health services; participation in preventive health care programs; activities in the area of mental health and mental retardation; participation in prevention and rehabilitation programs for substance abuse; services to adults with physical disabilities; services to the terminally ill; and services for adults living with HIV or AIDS.

### ***Human Needs Services***

Human Needs Services include such activities as crisis intervention; providing support and social activities to frail adults in adult day care and senior centers; and providing temporary relief from the stresses of caregiving through short-term, intermittent assistance to an adult who is a primary caregiver for a person with disabilities.

### ***Community and Economic Development***

Senior Companions provide consumer information to their frail clients and caregivers, as well as providing transportation services to allow frail adults to live independently.

### ***Public Safety***

Senior Companions provide aid, assistance, and counsel for elderly victims of family violence; identify and report safety problems; and supply crime avoidance information to their frail clients.

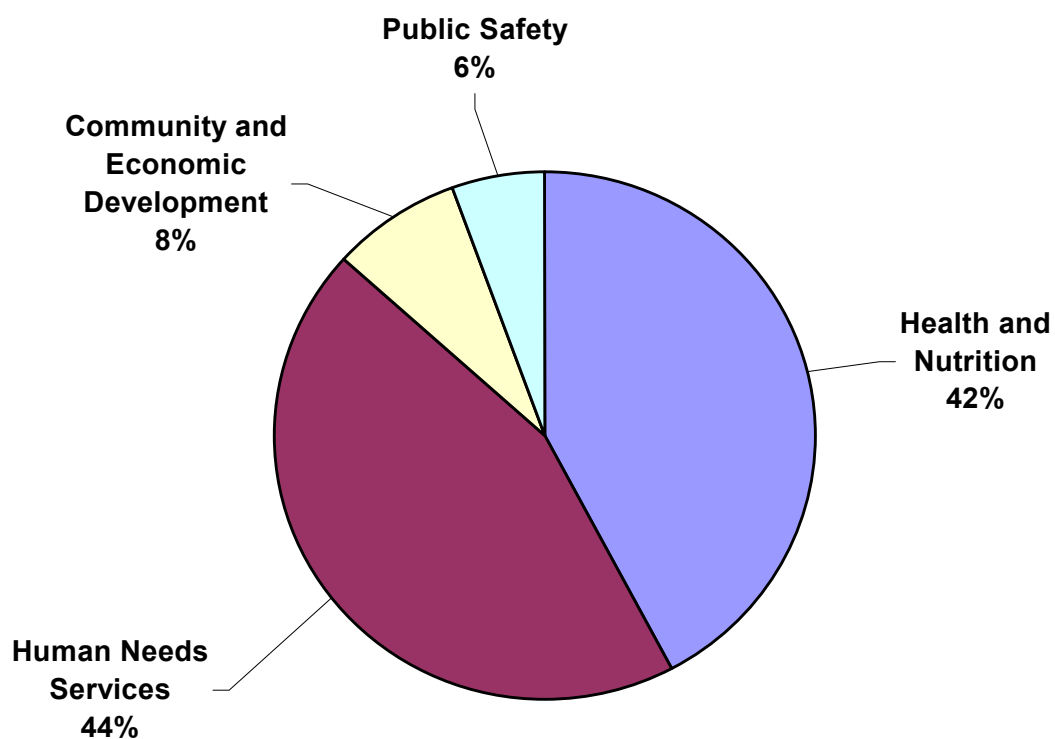
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<sup>2</sup> The final response rate excludes 242 closed, inactive or invalid stations.

## SENIOR COMPANION PARTICIPATION BY PROGRAM EMPHASIS AREA

During the reporting year, 14,700<sup>3</sup> Senior Companions actively participated in the four program emphasis areas (see Figure 1). Over this period, 44 percent of the Senior Companions volunteered in the program emphasis area of Human Needs Services; 42 percent in the area of Health and Nutrition; 8 percent in Community and Economic Development; and 6 percent in Public Safety.

**Figure 1. Percentage of Senior Companions by Program Emphasis Area**



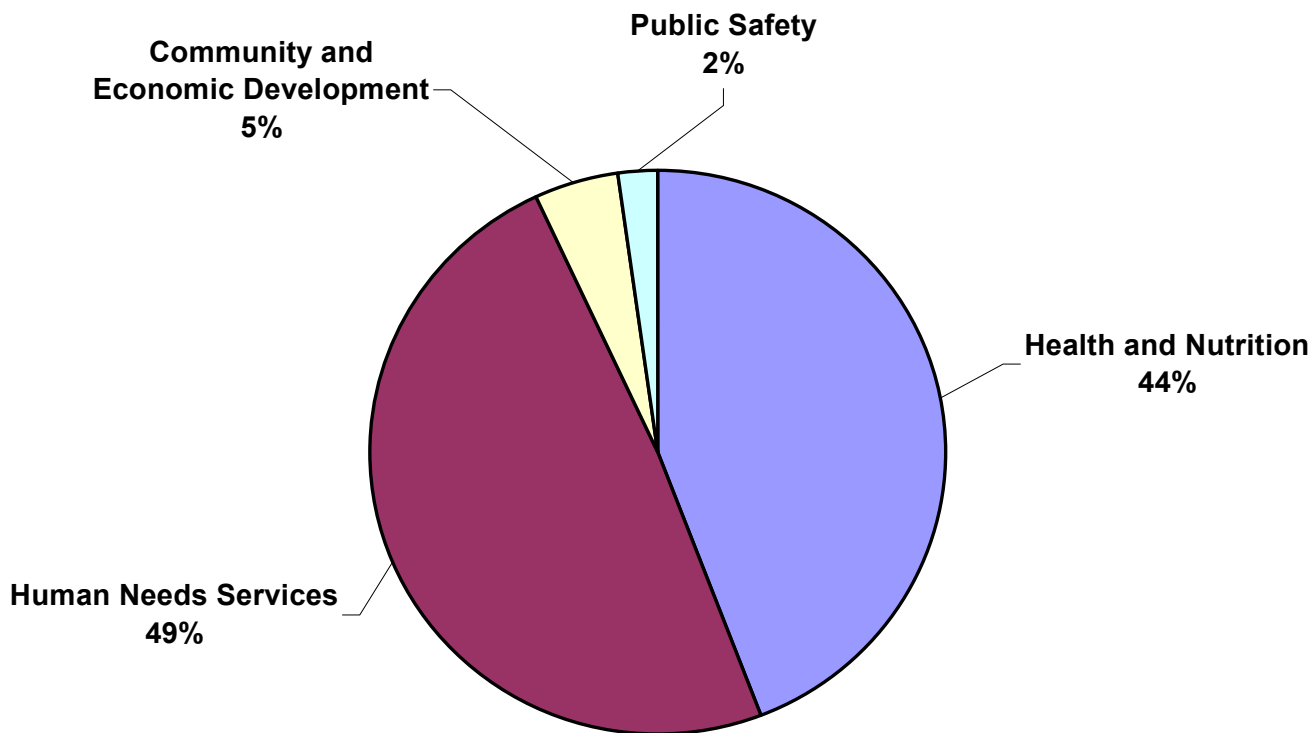
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<sup>3</sup> Source: 1999 Project Profile and Volunteer Activity Survey, National Senior Service Corps.

## **VOLUNTEER HOURS SPENT BY PROGRAM EMPHASIS AREA**

Senior Companions served over 12.5 million<sup>4</sup> hours in the four program emphasis areas. Nearly half of these hours (49 percent) were in the area of Human Needs Services and 44 percent of the volunteer hours were spent in the Health and Nutrition area. Community and Economic Development accounted for 5 percent of the volunteer hours, and Public Safety accounted for 2 percent (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Percentage of Volunteer Hours Spent by Program Emphasis Area**



<sup>4</sup> Source: 1999 Project Profile and Volunteer Activity Survey, National Senior Service Corps.



## **TYPES OF COMMUNITY AGENCIES WITH SENIOR COMPANION VOLUNTEERS (VOLUNTEER STATIONS)**

Most of the community agencies that served as placement sites for Senior Companions (14 percent) were multi-purpose/senior centers. Nursing homes and other social service/human needs agencies were the next most common sites comprising 10 percent each. The remaining locations were very diverse: adult day care (8 percent); public housing (8 percent); non-profit agencies on aging (7 percent); nutrition sites (5 percent); home health care agencies (5 percent); hospitals/clinics (5 percent); other SCP stations (5 percent) and other public/social service agencies (5 percent). Several other venues (less than 4 percent each) totaled 18 percent (see Figure 3). Staff from these agencies supervised the Senior Companions. Most of the actual services delivered by Senior Companions were performed in private homes of the clients.

**Figure 3. Types of Community Agencies with Senior Companion Volunteers  
(Volunteer Stations)**

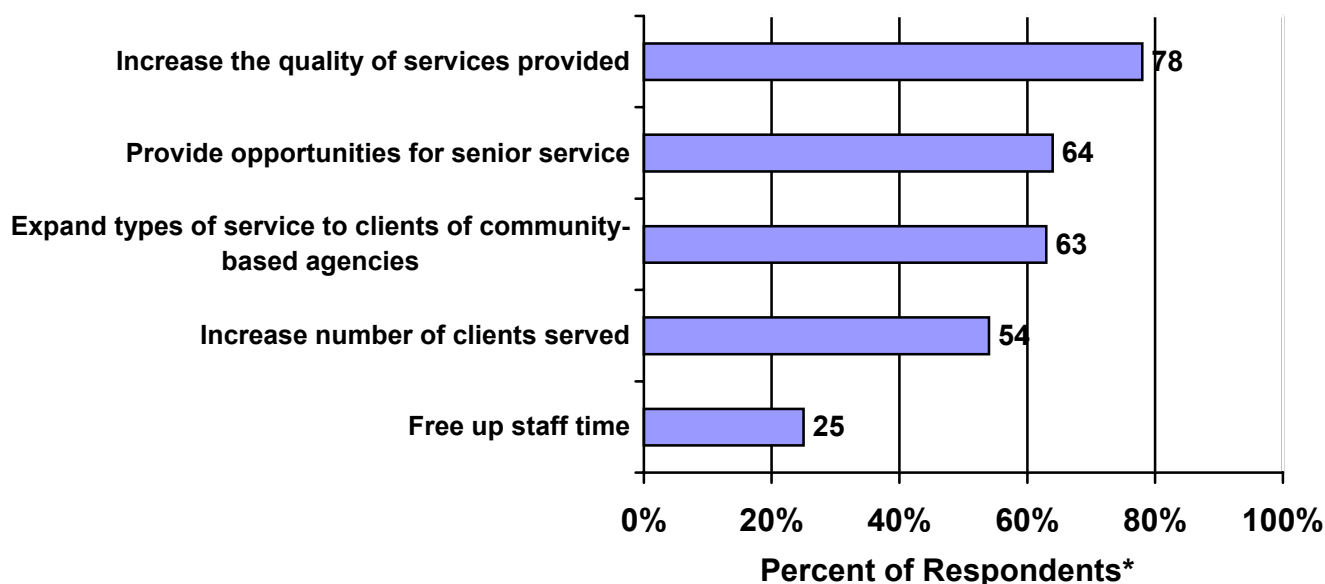
<u>Type of Agency</u>	<u>Percent*</u>
Multi-Purpose Centers (including Senior Centers)	14%
Nursing Homes/Convalescent Centers/Hospices	10%
Other Social Services/Human Needs Agencies	10%
Adult Day Care	8%
Public Housing	8%
Non Profit Agencies on Aging	7%
Nutrition Site	5%
Home Health Care Agencies	5%
Hospital/Medical Center/Clinic	5%
Other SCP Stations	5%
Other Public Social/Social Service Agency	5%
Other Public Health Agency	4%
Other Health Care Orgs., Please specify	4%
Residential Long-Term Care Programs (MH/MR/DD)	4%
Non-Residential Mental Health programs	2%
Veteran's Assistance	1%
Rehabilitation Center	1%
Other social service/human need organization/agency	1%

\*Does not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

## REASONS THAT COMMUNITY AGENCIES SERVE AS PLACEMENT SITES FOR SENIOR COMPANIONS

The agencies serving as volunteer stations cited several reasons for including Senior Companions in their service delivery systems. Over three quarters (78 percent) of respondents noted that their organization chose to serve as a volunteer station to increase the quality of services provided to clients. The next most frequently selected reasons were to provide opportunities for Senior Companion Service and to expand types of services offered to clients. One respondent noted “Without this service many of the clients served by the Companions would need nursing home placement.” Many others indicated that Senior Companions helped their organization offer companionship and social support, and enhanced the daily lives of their clients. Figure 4, below, provides the percentages of responses in each category.

**Figure 4. Reasons that Community Agencies Serve as Placement Sites**



\*Respondents could select all answers that applied to them, therefore percentages total more than 100%.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS BY PROGRAM EMPHASIS AREA

The following information on the accomplishments of Senior Companions was drawn from responses to the survey form completed by Senior Companion Supervisors and Project Directors. Below we detail accomplishments for the Senior Companion Program in the four program emphasis areas: Human Needs Services, Health and Nutrition, Community and Economic Development, and Public Safety. It should be noted that Senior Companions often provide multiple services for the same client, therefore the number of clients and hours listed in specific accomplishment items may total more than the total clients and hours served.

### *Human Needs Services*

Of the over 12.5 million<sup>5</sup> hours served by Senior Companions, it is estimated that almost half (49 percent) were spent in the area of human needs services. The estimated dollar value of the services provided by Senior Companions in the area of Human Needs Services ranged from \$31.5 million (based on the federal minimum hourly wage of \$5.15) to \$94.2 million (based on the Independent Sector's valuation of the equivalent hourly wage for volunteers of \$15.39).<sup>6</sup>

In the Human Needs Services area, the types of organizations serving as stations were widespread: multi-purpose centers (16 percent); adult day care (10 percent); nursing homes or hospices (9 percent); social services/human needs agencies (9 percent); public housing (8 percent); non profit agencies on aging (7 percent); nutrition sites (6 percent); home health care agencies (5 percent); and hospital/medical center/clinic (5 percent). The remaining 25 percent of sites accounted for less than 5 percent each of the site types listed, and included residential long-term care programs, veterans' assistance, rehabilitation centers and other sites.

*Accomplishments in Human Needs Services include:*

➤ **Companionship/Outreach: 9,488 Senior Companions spent over 5.2 million hours providing services in this area.**

- Participated in activities such as peer counseling, support, writing letters, listening, reading, and talking to 68,311 frail adults to ease feelings of loneliness
- Provided companionship, friendly visiting, and reassurance to 67,602 frail adults
- Visited with/nurtured 29,349 hospitalized frail adults

*Human Needs Services Accomplishments continued:*

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<sup>5</sup> Source: 1999 Project Profile and Volunteer Activity Survey, conducted by the Corporation for National Service.

<sup>6</sup> Independent Sector is a national coalition of voluntary organizations, foundations and corporate giving programs. Independent Sector conducts research on the size and state of the non-profit, or independent, sector, including this valuation of volunteer time. Website at <http://www.indepsec.org>.

- **Respite: 3,621 Senior Companions spent over 1.8 million hours providing services in this area.**
  - Provided information on respite service to 18,436 frail adults and their caregivers
  - Provided respite for 20,459 caregivers of frail adults
- **Senior Citizens Assistance: 1,437 Senior Companions spent 359,000 hours providing services in this area.**
  - Identified 9,057 community support resources for 16,491 frail adults
- **Housing Referrals/Relocation/Other Housing Related Services: 236 Senior Companions spent 41,000 hours providing services in this area.**
  - Provided assistance to 942 frail adults transitioning from institutional to independent living
- **Adult Day Care: 1,037 Senior Companions spent 672,000 hours providing services in this area.**
  - Assisted with supportive services and social activities at adult day care centers benefiting 15,682 adult clients.
- **Senior Center Programs: 808 Senior Companions spent 260,000 hours providing services in this area.**
  - Assisted with supportive services and social activities at senior centers benefiting 7,945 frail adults

## ***Health and Nutrition***

Accomplishments in the area of Health and Nutrition represented 44 percent of the hours served by Senior Companions. The estimated dollar value of these services ranged from \$28.3 million (based on the federal minimum hourly wage of \$5.15) to over \$84.6 million (based on the Independent Sector's valuation of the equivalent hourly wage for volunteers of \$15.39).

Activities in the Health and Nutrition area took place through a variety of station organizations: multi-purpose centers (14 percent); other social services/human needs agencies (9 percent); nursing homes/convalescent centers/hospices (8 percent); public housing (8 percent); home health care agencies (7 percent); non profit agencies on aging (7 percent); hospital/medical center/clinic (7 percent); nutrition sites (6 percent); social service agencies (5 percent); and adult day care centers (5 percent). The remaining station types (less than 5 percent each) totaled 24 percent and included: residential and non-residential mental health programs, hospitals/medical

centers/clinics, rehabilitation centers, and veterans' assistance.

*Accomplishments in Health and Nutrition include:*

- **In-Home Care: 7,176 Senior Companions spent 4 million hours providing services in this area.**
  - Provided support for limited health and maintenance activities (e.g. bathing, dressing, grooming, toileting, etc.) to 17,115 frail adults needing long term care at home
  - Provided information on in-home care services to 15,037 frail adults
  - Provided services such as light housekeeping, meal preparation, and nutritional information to 25,668 frail adults needing long term care at home
  - Allowed the organization to deliver services more efficiently by freeing up professional/para-professional caregivers to expand in-home care services to 11,090 additional frail adults
  - Allowed the organization to offer new in-home services to 5,946 frail adults
- **Delivery of Health Services: 2,180 Senior Companions spent 715,000 hours providing services in this area.**
  - Provided escort and support services to 23,479 frail adults in community clinics
  - Provided health services at a clinic, hospital, mobile-unit, nursing home or adult day care center to 15,986 frail adults
  - Provided information on the delivery of health services to 11,740 frail adults
  - Helped with preparation for and recovery from surgery for 12,591 frail adults
  - Provided other health services to 8,478 frail adults
- **Mental Retardation: 1,212 Senior Companions spent 799,000 hours providing services in this area.**
  - Provided support services to 4,263 frail adults with developmental disabilities
- **Mental Health: 743 Senior Companions spent 439,000 hours providing services in this area.**
  - Provided support services to 3,463 frail adults with mental health issues or environmental impairment

*Health and Nutrition Accomplishments continued:*

- **Hospice/Terminally Ill: 936 Senior Companions spent 343,000 hours providing services in this area.**
  - Provided information on terminal illness and hospices to 4,044 frail adults
  - Provided nurturing and support to 5,012 terminally ill adults
  - Provided services at hospices, health care institutions, and in the home to 4,191 terminally ill adults
- **Physical Disabilities Programs: 1,146 Senior Companions spent 373,000 hours providing services in this area.**
  - Provided information on physical disabilities to 2,261 frail adults
  - Provided services, rehabilitation, therapy, and exercise to 4,528 frail adults with physical disabilities
- **HIV/AIDS: 88 Senior Companions spent 39,000 hours providing services in this area.**
  - Provided information on HIV/AIDS programs to 188 frail adults
  - Provided nurturing and support for 364 frail adults with HIV/AIDS and their families
  - Provided support services to 312 frail adults with HIV/AIDS at hospices, health care institutions, and in the home
- **Substance Abuse: 182 Senior Companions spent 57,000 hours providing services in this area.**
  - Disseminated 188 informational fliers on alcohol, prescription and illegal drugs, and over the counter medication use to 573 alcoholics and drug abusers
  - Provided information on substance abuse to 796 frail adults
  - Provided support services through rehabilitation programs for 665 frail adult alcoholics and drug abusers and their families
  - Supported participation in AA type group meetings for 663 frail adults
- **Other Health/Nutrition: 3,101 Senior Companions spent over 1.2 million hours providing services in this area.**
  - Served as “eyes and ears” to identify potential problems or needed services for case management professionals with 22,752 frail adults
  - Provided information on other health and nutrition services to 13,806 frail adults

## ***Community and Economic Development***

Community and Economic Development represented 5 percent of the hours served by Senior Companions. The estimated dollar value of these services ranged from \$3.2 million dollars (based on the federal minimum hourly wage of \$5.15) to \$9.6 million (based on the Independent Sector's valuation of the equivalent hourly wage for volunteers of \$15.39).

Many of the Community and Economic Development project activities performed by Senior Companions were scattered among a variety of agencies and locations. Multi-purpose centers represented the largest group with 23 percent of site types specified in this group. Other stations were listed as social services/human needs agencies (11 percent); public housing (9 percent); home health care agencies (9 percent); nutrition sites (8 percent); and non profit agencies on aging (8 percent). The remaining 31 percent of site types selected included adult day care centers, nursing homes, and hospitals.

*Accomplishments in Community and Economic Development include:*

- **Transportation Services: 2,894 Senior Companions spent 804,000 hours providing services in this area.**
  - Drove 16,761 people needing escort services for grocery shopping, errands, and doctor visits for 3,145,801 miles

## ***Public Safety***

The estimated dollar value of the services provided by Senior Companions in the area of Public Safety ranged from \$1.2 million (based on the federal minimum hourly wage of \$5.15) to \$3.8 million (based on the Independent Sector's valuation of the equivalent hourly wage for volunteers of \$15.39).

Most of the Public Safety activities were performed by Senior Companions assigned to multi-purpose centers (19 percent); non profit agencies on aging (12 percent); nutrition sites (11 percent); social service agencies (9 percent); adult day care centers (8 percent); other social services/human needs agencies (7 percent); and public housing (7 percent). The remaining 27 percent included home health care agencies, hospitals, and veterans assistance sites.

*Accomplishments in Public Safety include:*

- **Safety/Fire Prevention/Accident Prevention: 840 Senior Companions spent 92,000 hours providing services in this area.**
  - Identified and reported 2,259 safety problems affecting 2,147 frail adults (such as home safety, fire prevention, auto safety, traffic/pedestrian control problems)
- **Crime Awareness and Avoidance: 792 Senior Companions spent 122,000 hours providing services in this area.**
  - Identified and reported 264 potential crime problems benefiting 1,301 frail adults
  - Provided safety escort services to 2,676 frail adults
  - Provided information to 6,636 frail adults in ways to avoid victimization such as direct deposit services and scam alerts
- **Elder Abuse and Neglect: 439 Senior Companions spent 118,000 hours providing services in this area.**
  - Aided and assisted 3,872 frail abused adults and their families



## CONCLUSIONS

According to its mission statement, the Senior Companion Program was designed to engage persons 60 and older, particularly those with limited incomes, in volunteer service to meet critical community needs; and to provide a high quality experience that will enrich the lives of the volunteers. Program funds are used to support Senior Companions in providing supportive, individualized services to help adults with special needs maintain their dignity and independence<sup>7</sup>.

It is evident from the data collected in this survey that the Senior Companion Program is achieving its purpose of meeting critical community needs, providing volunteer opportunities, and helping adults with special needs maintain their dignity and independence by:

- providing companionship, nurturing, support and other services that meet basic human needs of frail adults, thereby helping older adults continue to live independently (e.g., friendly visiting, light housekeeping, helping with paperwork, and other activities around the home);
- providing support to older adults who are receiving medical services or recovering from surgery at hospitals, clinics and nursing homes;
- providing respite, giving family members of homebound elderly individuals a break from their day-to-day duties; and,
- providing education that helped older adults avoid becoming victims of fraud and abuse, and assisted in situations involving adult abuse.

In conclusion, the findings from the Senior Companions Program accomplishment survey demonstrate that Senior Companions are meeting community needs in many ways. Their services provide older, frail adults with much-needed care, companionship and support, and in many cases, help them to continue to live independently.

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<sup>7</sup>Federal Register, p.14116. Vol. 64, No.56, 1999.



## APPENDIX: STUDY METHODOLOGY

The accomplishments described in this report were derived from the survey form entitled, “Meeting Community Needs: A Survey of the Senior Companion Program’s (SCP) Activities, Inputs and Accomplishments,” conducted by Aguirre International, an independent social science research firm, under contract to the Corporation for National Service.<sup>8</sup> This survey covers four priority areas, (Health/Nutrition, Human Needs Services, Community and Economic Development and Public Safety) which encompass 23 Basic Human Needs (BHN) codes and 41 specific accomplishment items.

During the initial accomplishment study in 1998, stakeholders determined that the best way to gather information about Senior Companion accomplishments was to survey the common agencies where volunteers are placed and supervised within the project (volunteer stations). Therefore, in order to develop the sampling frame for the 2000 study, volunteer station lists were requested from all 202 Senior Companion Program projects. Over 90 percent of the lists were received. Using a simple random sampling (SRS) procedure, 1,091 community agencies where Senior Companions are stationed were selected from these lists for the study. The goal of the sampling strategy was to randomly select a portion of all the stations under study in such a manner that the characteristics of the sample had a very high probability of accurately reflecting the characteristics of Senior Companion volunteer stations nationally.

Aguirre International administered the survey by mail. Surveys for the stations selected were sent to Senior Companion project directors, who were asked to send copies of the survey to the station coordinators and to make either a phone or in-person appointment to review the survey. Project directors worked cooperatively with station supervisors to ensure that the survey was answered completely and accurately. Aguirre International staff worked with the project directors to ensure that station surveys were returned and that the data provided were reasonable and complete. The survey achieved a 90 percent response rate (766 of 849 surveys were completed and returned)<sup>9</sup>. This is 10 percentage points above our survey goal of 80 percent.

In order to produce national estimates presented in this report, a weighting procedure was used which took into account the response rate for the surveys and the probability that a given station

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<sup>8</sup> Through this survey, project sponsors quantify the contributions that Senior Companion Program volunteers make toward meeting critical community needs. Counts of service performed are collected using a standard survey form that allows for aggregating data at the national level. Station supervisors and/or project directors complete the forms, based on their own systems for keeping records of activities and accomplishments. The data are subject to verification, edit checks, range checks, and other tests of reasonableness by the research contractor. However, the data are self-reported by grantees and station supervisors, and therefore dependent on the accuracy and completeness of the tracking systems they maintain. In most cases, the data are not subject to audit or other, less formal reviews by independent investigators. The Corporation for National Service has provided extensive technical assistance in accomplishment reporting.

<sup>9</sup> The final response rate excludes 242 closed, inactive or invalid stations.

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would be included in the sample<sup>10</sup> (sampling probability). Applying the weight to each national Senior Companion stations' data and aggregating the data across all projects provided the weighted data that is incorporated in this report.

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<sup>10</sup> For example, if there are 3000 SCP stations and a sample of 1000 stations is drawn, then the probability that a given station will be drawn is 1 out of 3 or 33%. If 800 of the 1000 stations sampled returned their surveys then the probability of inclusion was 80% or 0.80. Multiplying these two numbers provides the sampling probability. The sampling weight applied to each station would be the inverse of the sampling probability or  $1/(.33*.80)$ . Therefore the weight for each of these stations would be 3.79.